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The TRIUMPH OF LIGHT *By* CHARLES KEELER

THE TRIUMPH OF LIGHT

A California Midwinter Sun Mystery

BY CHARLES KEELER

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LIVE-OAK, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
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Press of
Standard Publishing Company
Berkeley, California

CHARACTERS REPRESENTED

In the order of their appearance

Priest of the Sun
Chorus of Night
Mortality
Seraph of Dawn
The Spirits of California—
  Quercus—the oak
  Pinus—the pine
  Madroño
  Sequoia
  Sacramento
  Shasta
  Pacificus
  The Sierrades
  Nymphs and Dryads, led by Pan
Chorus of Birds—
  Meadow Lark
  Quail
  Goldfinch
  Wren
  Jay
  Robin
  Golden-crowned Sparrow
  Song-Sparrow
  Wren Tit
  California Woodpecker

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CHARACTERS REPRESENTED

Nature—Mother of Earth and Sea
Chorus of Flowers—
  Violet Nightshade
  Orange Mimulus
  Fern
  Brake
  Thimble-Berry
  Mustard
  Buttercup
  Scouring Rush
  Wild Currant
  Purple Lupine
First, Second, Third and Fourth Heralds of the Sun
Chorus of the Sun, representing the twelve signs of the Zodiac
King of Light
Love—a little child

Scene—A Church. The organ plays Fantasie in Freiem Style by Gustav Merkel (Leipsic, J. Reiter—Biedermann).

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THE TRIUMPH OF LIGHT

(Enter a Priest of the Sun in scarlet robe, piped with gold.)

PRIEST OF THE SUN

Attend, O host devout, we bid you heed
A pageant timed for the ascending sun.
The southmost arc is traced, and day by day
The orb of light in widening zones aspires,
Scaling the zenith in triumphant round.
Season of eld to Saturn dedicate,
With twinkling tapers and new-lighted pyres,
Commemoration of the golden age
When Cronus with titanic hierarchy
Dominion held within the zodiac.
Here by the wide west sea another race
Of forms cyclopean have conspired to rear
Wild monuments of wonder and delight.
With fire and ice, with wind and rain and snow
The giant sculptors long have striven here,
Fashioning with tireless zeal their work sublime.
Attend, O friends devout, and learn what chanced
To that world-surfeited, unhappy man,
Mortality, who, lost in ebon gloom,
Unfriended wandered. Lore of earth had he

With Science probed, and to its utmost deeps
With microcosmic scrutiny explored;
And he was tyrant in that mighty realm
Where well-stored coffers buy what men will sell—
Labor and life and honor—all for gold!

(Alas that we are subjects of this lord!)

You shall behold the harbinger of Dawn
Encounter him amid the sombre night,
And summon round the spirits of the West—
The everlasting hills, the trees, the sea,
The birds and flowers. And then a pageant bright,
The King of Day with radiant throng shall come,
While all the wild things chant a hymn of praise.
And stately Nature shall invoke his power
To lift the veil and show Mortality
The mystery of life. O hallowed sight!
The mystery that Hindoo Krishna taught,
That Indian Buddha preached by Ganges stream,
That Plato in Athenian groves made plain,
That Christ maintained in death on Calvary.
Now at this festal hour we hail the light,

And peace on earth, good will to men we sing.
O Lord, we pray Thee, lead us toward the right,
As sure as winter moveth toward the spring!

(Exit Priest of the Sun. The lights are turned off, leaving the church in total darkness. A low murmur of the organ is heard. Oriental Sketch No. 2, F minor, by Arthur Bird. Voices sound in the darkness intoning solemnly while the music plays.)

CHORUS OF NIGHT

Darkness and gloom and the spectres nocturnal enthralled,
Flutter of bat-wings tumultuous fanning the air!
Weird ullulations of owls by night unappalled,
Echoing deep through the caverns of doom in despair!
Hoo! too hoo! Hoo! too hoo!
With the whisk and the whir of the bat-wings astir
'Mid the boughs of the oak, in the needles of fir!
O dolorous darkness, O chaos of gloom,
We chant from the deeps of the forest of doom!

(From another part of the church is heard a voice crying out in the dark).

MORTALITY

Woe is me! Woe is me!
Lost is Mortality!
Whelmed in iniquity!
Cursed by grim destiny!
Ghosts of the haunted wood
Bode naught of vaunted good,
Dead things are clattering,
Demons are chattering,
Lost is Mortality,
Cursed by grim destiny!

CHORUS OF NIGHT

Spirits of the dark wind,
Spectres of the damp wind,
Furies of the cruel wind,
Croon us a lullaby,
Sigh us a hushaby song of despair!
Gasp of the flowers that shrivel before you,
Cry of the birdlings that shiver and flee!
Wail us a dirge for the things that abhor you,
Croon us a catch from the rune of the sea!

MORTALITY

Hark to the fiends in funereal din!

THE TRIUMPH OF LIGHT

Woe to Mortality, cursed and alone!
Night with tempestuous troubles of sin
Shudders about with lugubrious moan!
Where is the light?
Not a beam in the night,
Not a star in the heavens to lead me aright!

CHORUS OF NIGHT

Hoo! too hoo! Hoo! too hoo!
King Bubo is crying
And echoes are dying
In grottos of gloom,
Hoo! too hoo! Hoo! too hoo!
List to his calling!
Echoes are falling
To faint on his tomb!

(A voice is heard chanting in another part of the church. The Seraph of Dawn appears carrying a dim taper representing the morning star. A faint light gleams on the black-robed shrinking figures of the Chorus of Night.)

SERAPH OF DAWN

Make way for my master—the King of the Day!

Flee spirits unhallowed in fearful array!
Hence! owls and bats to your caverns in fear,
For the conquering King of the Morning is near!

CHORUS OF NIGHT

Murmur and mumble and mutter and moan,
The bats are a-winging, the owlets have flown,
The night wind is sleeping,
The dawn mist is weeping
And we must be sweeping to drearier zone!

(Exit Chorus of Night.)

SERAPH OF DAWN

Spirits of the winter brooks and rills,
Piping Pan with all your rabble rout,
Valley nymphs and Oreiads of the hills,
Attend the dawn with jocund song and shout!
Bearded Quercus, gnarled and bent,
Stately Pinus, green and straight,
Madroño gay with berries sprent,
Hoar Sequoia, titan great—
Attend the dawn! Attend! Attend!
Come Sacramento, lift your silver voice,
And lead your mother Shasta, frore and white,

Come vast Pacificus and shout, Rejoice!
The King of Day is nigh with boon of light!
Ye hoar-crowned brethren, the Sierrades,
With call of storms on peaks above the trees,
Attend the dawn! Attend! Attend!

(The organ plays the War March of the Priests in Athalie, by Mendelssohn—organ arrangement by Charles Steggall. Enter the Spirits of California, Quercus, Pinus, Madroño, Sequoia, Sacramento, Shasta, Pacificus, the Sierrades, with Nymphs and Oreiads; led by Pan. The light of dawn brightens.)

MORTALITY

Look, what a pageant troops from dusk of night!
The solemn conclave of the priests of light!
O would that I might find the pure serene
That, hallowed, broods o'er their sublime demesne!

CHORUS OF THE SPIRITS OF CALIFORNIA

(Sung to the tune of War March of the Priests.)

THE TRIUMPH OF LIGHT

O wake, wake, wake! Cometh the promise of the morning!
O hope! O boon of joy, the King of Day ascends his throne!
O wake, wake, wake! Banished is night! Blessed be light! light! light!
Lord of the Day! Conquering King! Hail! Hail!
Light, light, light, light! Hail! Hail!
All cry! shout! sing!
Sing forth the tidings glad of morn.
O hallelujah! praise the Lord of Light!
Hail the King of Day!

MESSENGER OF DAWN

Sleeping winter birdlings waken,
Morning's breeze your boughs have shaken,
Lift your heads and whet your bills,
Stretch your wings and peck your quills!
Meadow-larks on misty lea
Pipe a winter melody!
Tit-larks teetering on the plain,
Twit your merry calls again.
Rouse you saucy blue-coat jay,
Kinglets wake at break of day!
Bustling wren and tiny tit

'Mid the manzanitas flit!
Sleeping winter birdlings waken—
Morning's breeze your boughs have shaken!

(Enter a troop of boys dressed to represent the Chorus of Birds. They hop and skip about, each impersonating a particular bird.)

CHORUS OF BIRDS

Light hearts,
Bright hearts,
Beating gay
At peep of day!
Full throats,
Glad notes,
Rippling free
In bush and tree!

MEADOW LARK

Gold in the mist are the meadows at morn,
Little mate list while I wind my horn!
Twie, twie, twill de dill dee!

QUAIL

Coo, coo, coo! Coo, coo, coo!
The top of the morning, kind friends, to you!

GOLDFINCH

O we twitter on the thistle-down, twit, twit, twit!

WREN

O we chatter in the bramble and we never mind a whit!

JAY

Squawk, squawk, squawk! and squeak, squeak, squeak!

ROBIN

O cheer up at the dawning and be merry when you speak!
Ha ha ha ha ha ha!

GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW

I'm so sad! I'm so sad!

(Recited with a sigh on a downward scale.)

SONG SPARROW

Why not be glad
Like me?
Tweedle de dee!

WREN TIT

Tit! tit! tit! ta reeeeeee!

CALIFORNIA WOODPECKER

O rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat on the tree!

CHORUS OF BIRDS

We flutter and flit
With a tweet and a twit!
Swift wings a-whirring
'Mid winter leaves stirring!
We frolic and flutter
And merrily utter
Our trill-de-dill-dillings,
Our chirrups and trillings.

(Mortality advances to the front. He is an old man with long white beard, and leans on a staff.)

MORTALITY

Alas, and woe is me, there is no peace.
Though night is gone, from care is no surcease!
Why, look you little birds, how blithe your notes!
Do sorrows never choke your gurgling throats?

(Enter Nature, Mother of Earth and Sea.)

Behold, your Mother Nature draweth near,

The fair earth matron greets her children dear!

NATURE

What ho, my children, waken all and sing!

CHORUS OF BIRDS

We flutter and flit
With a tweet and a twit!
Swift wings a-whirring
'Mid winter leaves stirring.

NATURE

Ah, blithe you are, my birdlings gay,
Singing and chirping at peep of day!
Sweet meadow-lark, arise and heed
The flush of dawn! come, tune your reed!

MEADOW-LARK (dancing forward).

Twee, twee! twill diddle dee!

NATURE

And where is proud Sir Plumëd Quail?

QUAIL (dancing forward).

Coo, coo, coo! How do you do!

NATURE

Now little black-capped goldfinch, hail!

GOLDFINCH (dancing forward).

Twie-te-te-te-te-te-te-te-te!

NATURE

And is my saucy wren about?

WREN (dancing forward).

Chat-chat-chat-chat-chat-chat!

NATURE

And where's the jay with laugh and shout?

JAY (dancing forward).

Squawk! squawk! squawk! squawk!

NATURE

Ho! birdlings all with song and call,
Behold the winter sun is coming!
So flit about the forest hall
With whistling pipe and wings a-humming.

(The birds dance about her and then retreat.)

Ho! messenger of dawn, where sleep my flowers?

Bid drowsy heads uplift in woodland bowers!

MESSENGER OF DAWN

Winter flow'rets lift your heads,
Nod no more in mossy beds,
Violet nightshade's clustering bells
Open wide in darkling dells,
Orange mimulus awake,
Fronds uncurl, O fern and brake,
Crinkly thimble-berry white,
Mustard gay in yellow dight,
Buttercups that star the hills,
Scouring rushes by the rills,
Pungent currant wild in pink,
Swaying at the cañon's brink,
Purple lupines frilled with gray,—
All attend in blithe array.

(Enter the Chorus of Flowers marching and singing to the organ accompaniment of Marche Religieuse, by A. Chauvet (Best's Collection of Organ Pieces, Augener & Co., London.)

Waking at peep of day,
Lightly we swing and sway!
Gaily! gaily!

Tossing our heads in play!

Op'ning our petals bright,
Ah what a happy sight!
Hail ho! hail ho!
Hail to the dawning!

(Organ interlude.)

Soon will the sun appear,
Scattering joy and cheer,
Brightly! brightly!
Down on his children dear!

(The music changes and the flowers dance, singing in chorus.)

Shimmering leaves and bells a-shaking,
Morning weaves its spell of waking,
Tossing heads and stems a-swaying,
Come and join our troop a-playing!

Fuzzy bees are buzzing round us,
Morning's gentle breeze has found us,
And a merry pipe 'tis blowing
While we frisk in flounces flowing!

(Organ interlude in march time.)

All sing:

Hail! hail! the dawning!
Fondly swells our song of peace!

MORTALITY.

Ah Mother Nature, would that I might be,
Like these your children, young and full of joy,
Making the welkin ring at flush of day
With song and laughter from a care-free breast!

NATURE

Alas, Mortality, thou hast not learned
The way to happiness! the road to youth!
Take counsel of my children and be blessed!

MORTALITY

Ah, I have learned of them these many years;
The lore of ages sits upon my brow.
High as the eagle have I soared for truth,
And delvëd darkly with the ant and mole.
The seas interminable have I ranged;
Aye, to the pole star have I searched the dome,
But like an incubus my garnered store
Is slowly pressing me within my tomb!

NATURE

Nay, nay, Mortality, thou hast not learned
The mystery of mysteries, I ween.
Unholy creatures gave you tutelage
And held your heart in thrall. Mortality,
Had'st thou a mother?

MORTALITY.

'Twas so long agone
I scarce recall her voice or countenance.

NATURE

And hads't a mate to bear you children dear?

MORTALITY.

No mate, no children, save my brood of thoughts.

MOTHER NATURE.

Alas Mortality, your thoughts are dead,
And so you wander childless in the gloom!
Hark, your compatriots call you from afar!

(The voices of the Chorus of Night heard in the distance.)

Murmur and mumble and mutter and moan,
The bats are a-winging, the owls have flown;

The night wind is sleeping,
The dawn mist is weeping,
And we must be sweeping to drearier zone.

MORTALITY.

Oh save me, Mother Nature, from my doom!

NATURE

Go follow the birds and flowers in search of truth,
And if as you wander you find what you lost,—your youth,
Ah, cherish it tenderly, ask it the riddle you seek,
And list with your heart to its words if perchance it but speak.

(The Spirits of California lead the Chorus of Birds and Flowers. Mother Nature beckons to her children, and all march around the church, followed by Mortality, to the tune of Mendelssohn's War March of the Priests. The Messenger of Dawn alone remains at the altar.)

O wake, wake, wake! Cometh the promise of the morning!

THE TRIUMPH OF LIGHT

O hope! O boon of joy, the King of Day ascends his throne!
O wake, wake, wake! Banished is night! Blessed be light! light! light!
Lord of the Day! Conquering King! Hail! Hail!
Light, light, light, light! Hail! Hail!
All cry! shout! sing!
Sing forth the tidings glad of morn!
O hallelujah! praise the Lord of Light!
Hail the King of Day!

Out of the south
Armored in gold
Sparkling with fire!
Yonder he comes,
King of the Day!
Lord of the Light,
Hail to the King! Hail!

Round him a throng,
Chanting his praise,
Hail to the King! Hail!
Master and Sire,
Parent of Earth,
Hail to the King! Hail!
Darkness has fled,
Vanished is night,

Heralds are nigh
Trumpeting dawn!
Out of the south,
Yonder he comes,
Hail to the King! Hail!

MORTALITY

Ah Mother Nature, would that this might be
The dawning of a day of hope for me.
My sand runs low; the reaper's scythe is nigh
To gather my sere sheaf. I soon must die!

NATURE

Mortality, attend the King of Light!
Invoke his sufferance in your behest,
And if I read the heavens aught aright
Methinks his guerdon may reward your quest!

(Organ plays Reverie by P. A. Schnecker, Oliver Ditson.)

MESSENGER OF DAWN

Behold the coming of the throng of light!

(Enter one of the Chorus of the Sun, clad in white and gold.)

FIRST HERALD OF THE SUN

The sphere swings round to greet its King!

CHORUS

We swell the choir his praise to sing!

(Enter Second Herald of the Sun.)

SECOND HERALD

Ye spirits lift your eyes above the hills!

CHORUS

Look what a blaze of glory round them thrills!

(Enter Third Herald.)

THIRD HERALD.

The bright chrysocracy returns to power!

CHORUS

In El Dorado blessed be the hour!

(Enter Fourth Herald.)

FOURTH HERALD

Eureka! Hail the King! Behold his might!

CHORUS.

All hail the King of Day! All hail the Light!

THE TRIUMPH OF LIGHT

(Enter the Chorus of the Sun. At their head the King of Day in coat of golden mail with winged helmet. Surrounding him are his followers all in white and gold. In their center are a company of boys, also in white and gold, bearing a litter covered over with a sparkling canopy. The Spirits of California, Chorus of Birds and of Flowers shield their eyes and bow their heads. A blaze of light shines on the King of Day and his followers. Then with one accord lifting their arms they sing to the tune of the 2nd movement of Schnecker's Reverie.)

Sun in thy splendor of radiant might,
Burning in brilliance of conquering light,
Vast in the waste of the azure around thee,
Heaven to bear thee and heaven to bound thee,
Whence came the glory thou givest away?
Giver of gold at the gates of the day.

The trees and the flowers are fed by thy beams,
The cold earth is warmed by thy glittering streams,
The waters are woven in vestments above it
To shed benedictions in vapors that love it;
And all by the might of thy radiant sway,
Giver of gold at the gates of the day!

Calling the winds from the caves of the pole,
Bidding the boisterous thunder to roll,
Binding the planets submissive about thee,
Earth and its wonders would perish without thee,
Spelled by the might of thy radiant sway,
Giver of gold at the gates of the day!

NATURE (leading Mortality)

King of all bright and joyous gods of air,
And peerless master of the spheres of light,
O glorious ruler in thy parel blue,
Shining with thine own splendor through the void,
A multitude of spirits voice thy praise!
Thou hast engirdled earth with zone of cloud,
The waters thou hast scattered o'er the hills,
Thou hast ordained the winds, thy ministrants,
And summoned jocund birds to grace thy bow'rs.
At touch of thy bright wand the buds unfurl,
The waves all sparkle at thy joyous glance,
The world obeys thy mandates from afar.
The singing spheres in loud accord to thee
Address their harmonies, and all the throng
Of orbëd followers, in mighty strains,
Augment thy majesty. Fair Earth is thine,

With her pale lesser child, and all the day
Thou castest benediction on her head!
Thy will is perfect law, thy word is light,
And thy sweet influence unites the world.
Life, at thy bidding, leaps from formless stone;
The gods of sea and land, of cloud and shore
All own thy sovereignty, majestic King!
Thou makest cold things warm with ardent touch,
Thou castest sorrow to the winds of night,
Thou fillest earth and heav'n with joy and love!

KING OF LIGHT

Blest hierarchy of Earth, let joy resound!

NATURE

Before you stands Mortality, O King,
By centuries of sorrow lowly bowed.

KING OF LIGHT

And wouldst thou own allegiance unto me?

MORTALITY

Aye, King of Day. I bend before your might.

KING OF LIGHT

And dost thou fealty vow, O neophyte?

MORTALITY (bending low)

My long, unprofitable, mal-spent years
Now lay I at thy feet, majestic King!

KING OF LIGHT

Ill-starred thy wanderings through the wold of fears,
Arise, and with the choir of morning sing!
We shall initiate thee, seeking light,
Like Saturn zone thee with a girdle bright;
The mystery of life unveiled shall be,
O seeker in the dark—Mortality!
Where hast thou wandered, lo these many years,
Envisaged with wan night's unholy fears?

MORTALITY

Two lights have lured me on through restless years,
Power and truth, my lode-stars, lit the way.
The power of pilëd gold no challenge hears,
And science spells all hearts,—august its sway!

KING OF LIGHT

Gold buyeth palaces to tomb the soul,
And whirling dust for science is the goal.
Not in the dance of atoms lingers truth,
But in the wide-world pulsing heart of youth!

For truth, behold, is light, and light is life,
And at the inmost zone of life is love,
The power triumphant in the world of strife.
God's spirit bideth not aloof, above!
Unveil thy canopy, O spirits bright!
Behold, Mortality, the heart of light!

(Two of the Chorus of Light lift the canopy from the litter and reveal the figure of a sleeping child robed in white. The organ plays "In Paradisum" from Douze Pieces Nouvelles pour Orgue, by Theod. Dubois.)

CHORUS OF LIGHT

Lo the holy vision,
Mystic light of the world,
Seal of God for doubting mortals,
Spirit pure of love undying,
Man delivering, death encompassing;
Lighting life with the fire of God!

All fondly we behold the child.
O fired with joy we gather near!
Blest gift of God on earth—O holy child!
Serene in sleep fondly dreaming!

(Organ plays—then repeat song.)
O awaken,

We sing thy praise,
All hail! The child of love!

MORTALITY

So fair a vision have mine ancient eyes
Ne'er lingered on ere this propitious morn!
Methought when with my spectrum I dissolved
The beam of light, and each component part
Accounted in analysis, no more
Of mystery defied my searching ken;
But lo, this waking vision hath disclosed
A subtler, fairer presence shrined in light.

KING OF LIGHT (handing Mortality a torch.)

This torch of truth accept, Mortality,
And with it wake the sleeping form of Love.

(Mortality takes the torch and holds it in front of the face of the sleeping child. The child awakens and slowly stands.)

LOVE.

Who art thou, Sire, that hath awakened me?

MORTALITY

I am Mortality, o'erburthened long
With ills of flesh immedicable.

LOVE.

Lo,
Mortality, I pity thee, dear soul.
Bend down and let me kiss your ills away.

(Mortality bends over and Love kisses him.)

Thus from a child gain immortality!

MORTALITY

Dear child, in joy I fold you to my breast.
Searching I found not God, but with the kiss
A little child bestows, love enters in
To light the tabernacle of my heart,
And in that secret chamber, lo I see
God's grace benign of immortality!

(Lights out. The church in total darkness. All march slowly out singing. Organ, "In Paradisum.")

Lo, the holy vision,
Mystic light of the world,
Seal of God for doubting mortals,
Spirit pure of love undying
Man delivering, death encompassing,
Lighting life with the fire of God!

(Lights on.)

THE END

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